

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MUSIC  
THEMES AND THE MOTION PICTURE: *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*  
TRILOGY**

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Bachelor of Music Composition**

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

"I declare that this thesis is the result of my own work with the exception of the ideas and summaries which I have clarified their sources. This thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted as candidature for any degree"



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## ABSTRACT

For *something* we often barely notice: *film music* is in fact highly persuasive and effective. It creates tension, generates an emotional journey, and it is undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of true cinematic experience. Upon closer inspection, it can be realized that film music is a highly complex genre and a genuine work of art - not only it is capable to trigger an immediate emotional impact, but, it has also succeeded in giving birth to some of the most outstanding music that has ever been created in the twentieth century until in the present day. Film music is usually fragmentary and relies extensively on an understanding that it is not solely an organic part of the music, but rather; as a negotiation between the *logic of the film* and the *logic of the music*.<sup>1</sup> There is an ongoing debate amongst scholars pertaining to music's ability to convey meaning. Over the past decades, theorists and historians have explored music's ability to act as a narrator, to tell stories, and to convey emotions, represent characters, or allude to their actions.<sup>2</sup> Amongst these scholars, there are those who believe that music alone is capable to narrate; others believe that the composer is narrating through music; while some believe the listeners hear the music as though it is narrating regardless of the composer's intent; and those who believe that music cannot narrate due to its inherent lack of a narrator.<sup>3</sup> Film scores in particular; provide an analyst with literal objects and stories to which the music's meaning can be compared to. At the very least, a film score's role is to accompany the events occurring on-screen - which in turn suggests the music's ability to reflect some sort of meaning to the audience. However, it is possible that film music may do even more than simply accompanying the visual aspects of the movies; that it is also capable of provoking and enhancing the emotional experience of the audience, and additionally providing them with vital information pertinent to the storyline and character development.

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<sup>1</sup> Donnelly, K.J., *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, Edinburgh University Press (2001), page 32.

<sup>2</sup> Klein, Michael, *Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative*, Music Theory Spectrum (2004), page 13.

<sup>3</sup> Cohen, Annabel, "*Film Music: Perspectives from cognitive psychology*" in *Music and Cinema*, University Press of New England (2000), page 118.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant film scores to appear in the last decade was Howard Shore's score to Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy.<sup>1</sup> Howard Shore composed over 12 hours of original music, orchestrating over 80 specific musical themes and motifs to represent the numerous races and characters of Middle-earth.<sup>2</sup> The score has become the most successful of Shore's career, and is considered by many to be one of the most popular film scores of all time. An additional benefit to *The Lord of the Rings* score is the opportunity to not only considers the meaning of the music in relation to the visual representation on-screen, but also as an option to compare the film score to the novel on which the movies were based. J.R.R Tolkien's fantasy epic *The Lord of the Rings* has inspired thousands of musical works, and the novel also includes descriptions of instruments used in the different lands, poetry sung by its inhabitants, and the exhaustive descriptions of the varied cultures present throughout Middle-earth.

Anyone who has listened to the music of *The Lord of the Rings*; whether or not he or she has closely listened to the soundtrack albums, is pretty much aware that Howard Shore has created several distinctive themes in the music. These themes appear at different times, they are being played by use of different instrumentation; while supporting the different sorts of action on-screen. This style and method of scoring technique is called *leitmotif*. *Leitmotif* is a clearly defined theme or a musical idea, representing or symbolizing a person, an object, an idea, and so forth. It returns to its original or an altered form or variation at appropriate points in a dramatic work.<sup>3</sup> *Leitmotif* was brought to fame in the 19th century by a German composer; Richard Wagner, and the use of *leitmotif* has once again found a dramatic new precedence in the 20th century: *film scoring*. Whether it is in reference to *The Lord of the Rings* or

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<sup>1</sup> [www.soundtracknet.com](http://www.soundtracknet.com)

<sup>2</sup> [www.scoresoftherings.com](http://www.scoresoftherings.com)

<sup>3</sup> Prendergast, Roy M., *Film Music-A Neglected Art*, W.W.Norton & Company (1992), page 78.